

# Integrating the Monorail

## Appendix A draft

### **DRAFT**

PLANNING  
BACKGROUND  
REPORT

JULY 2003



City of Seattle

# Appendix A:

Summary of City of Seattle  
Design Review Guidelines  
Relevant to the  
Seattle Monorail Project

## Overview

In 1993 the City of Seattle initiated city-wide design review guidelines as part of the City's new Design Review program. Subsequently neighborhood-specific guidelines were developed beginning with the Downtown Development Guidelines in 1999.

The intent of these guidelines is to encourage better design and site planning, to enhance the character of the city and ensure that new development sensitively fits in to neighborhoods.

In addition to the city-wide Guidelines, four of the neighborhood specific guidelines are relevant to the

design of the Seattle Monorail Project. These include the Ballard Municipal Center Master Plan, the Design Review Guidelines for Downtown Development, the West Seattle Junction Urban Village Design Guidelines, and the forthcoming Belltown Neighborhood Design Guidelines.

While the guidelines were developed primarily to promote design excellence in private development they also provide an useful synopsis of city-wide urban design goals and a primer on the distinctive character and architectural context of Seattle's individual neighborhoods.

## Summary of relevant city-wide guidelines

The City-wide guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings provides helpful direction for the design of monorail elements particularly where stations or station entrances are located on private property or incorporated into existing structures. Those most relevant to the integration of the monorail include:

### A Site Planning

#### *A-1 Responding to Site Characteristics*

The siting of buildings should respond to specific conditions and opportunities such as non-rectangular lots, location on prominent intersection, unusual topography, significant vegetation and view or other natural features.

#### *A-2 Streetscape Compatibility*

The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.

#### *A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street*

Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.

#### *A-4 Human Activity*

New development should be sited and designed to

encourage human activity on the street.

#### *A-5 Respect of Adjacent Sites.*

Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on the site to minimize disruption of the privacy and out-door activities of residents in adjacent buildings.

#### *A-10 Corner Lots*

Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.

## B Height, Bulk and Scale

#### *B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility*

Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by less intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.

## C Architectural Elements and Materials

### C-1 Architectural Context

New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.

Building should show similar articulations, scale, proportion, building details and fenestration patterns of adjacent buildings. Like wise, similar or complementary architectural style, roof forms and materials should be used.

### C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency

Building design elements, detail and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept. In general the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its façade walls.

### C-3 Human Scale

The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.

### C-4 Exterior Finish Materials.

Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close.

## D Pedestrian Environment

### D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances

Convenient and attractive access to the building's entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open spaces should be considered.

### D-2 Blank Walls

Buildings should avoid large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks. Where blank walls are unavoidable they should receive design treatment to increase pedestrian comfort and interest.

### D-3 Retaining Walls

Retaining walls near a public sidewalk that extends higher than eye level should be avoided where possible. Where high retaining walls are unavoidable, they should be designed to reduce their impact on pedestrian comfort and to increase the visual interest along the streetscape.

### D-6 Screening of Utilities and Service areas.

Buildings should locate service elements like trash dumpsters, loading docks and mechanical equipment away from the street front where possible.

### D-7 Personal Safety and Security

- Project design should consider opportunities for enhancing personal safety and security in the environment under review.
- Techniques that can help promote safety include the following:
  - Providing adequate lighting
  - Retaining clear lines of sight
  - Using of semi-transparent security screening, rather than opaque walls.
  - Avoiding blank, windowless walls that attract graffiti.
  - Using of landscaping that maintains visibility, such as short shrubs and pruning trees so there are no branches below head height
  - Creative use of ornamental grille as fencing of over ground floor windows.
  - Absence of structures that provide hiding places from criminal activity.
  - Clear directional signage

## E. Landscaping

### E-1 Landscaping to Reinforce Design Continuity with Adjacent Sites

Where possible and where there is not another overriding concern, landscaping should reinforce the character of neighboring properties and abutting streetscape.

*E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site*  
Landscaping, including living plant material, special

pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.

#### *E-3 Landscaping Design to Address Special Site Conditions*

The landscaping design should take advantage of special on-site conditions such as high-bank front yards, steep slopes view corridors, or exiting significant trees and off-site conditions such as green belts, ravines, natural areas and boulevards.

## Summary of relevant Ballard Municipal Plan Guidelines

The goal of the Ballard Municipal Plan is to create a vital, pedestrian-oriented core and transportation focal point for the Ballard urban village. While the proposed monorail route will pass two blocks to the east of the Ballard Municipal Center planning area, these guidelines provide valuable general design direction for the broader Ballard area. The guidelines most relevant to the integration of the monorail include:

#### *C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency*

**Institutional Development:** The design of institutional buildings should be distinguished from commercial and residential buildings by location on the site, materials and massing. A building

with public uses should exhibit a civic presence through careful attention to its relationship with the public realm.

#### *C-4 Exterior Finish Materials*

New development should exhibit craftsmanship through the use of durable, attractive materials. Building materials and interesting details found on older buildings on Market Street and the Ballard Avenue Landmark District should be recalled.

#### *D-2 Blank Walls*

The Ballard guidelines underscore the need for active, open, interesting building facades.

## Summary of relevant Belltown Guidelines

Belltown is the only Seattle neighborhood that currently accommodates an existing monorail. As a result the Belltown Neighborhood Design Guidelines specifically encourage street furnishings to reflect the 'futuristic' design ethos of the Fifth Avenue monorail alignment. Other guidelines relevant to the integration of the monorail include:

### **A. Site planning and Massing**

#### *A-1 Respond to the physical environment*

Develop an architectural concept and compose the building's massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found nearby or beyond the immediate context of the building site.

### **B. Architectural Expression**

*B-1 Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features existing in the surrounding neighborhood.*

#### *B-2 Create a transition in bulk and scale*

Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk and scale development in nearby less-intensive zones. The objective of this guideline is to discourage overly massive bulky or unmodulated structures that are unsympathetic to the surrounding context.

*B-3 Reinforce the positive urban form and architec-*

*tural attributes of the immediate area.*

Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development. The siting and design of the base of new buildings is especially important to complement the massing and scale of existing buildings and are vital to the pedestrian experience.

## **C The Streetscape**

### *C-1 Promote pedestrian interactions*

Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the actives accruing within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should appear safe, welcoming and open to the general public.

### *C-5 Encourage overhead weather protection*

The monorail stations should provide continuous, well-lit overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety.

### *C-6 Develop the alley facade*

If relevant, to increase pedestrian safety, comfort and interest develop portions of the alley facade in response to unique conditions of the site or project.

## **D Public Amenities**

### *D-1 Provide inviting and useable open space.*

Design public open spaces to promote visually pleasing safe and active environment for worker, residents and visitors. Views and solar access from

the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized

### *D-2 Enhance the structure with landscaping.*

There are many examples of landscaping in Belltown that enhance the building, help define and soften the public realm and contribute to unique identity with a specific area.

### *D-3 Provide elements that define the place.*

Provide special elements on the facades within public open spaces, or on the sidewalk to create a distinct, attractive and memorable 'sense of place' associated with the building.

### *D-4 Provide adequate signage.*

Design signage appropriate for the scale and character of the project and immediate neighborhood. All signs should be oriented to pedestrians and/ or persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood.

### *D-5 Provide adequate lighting.*

To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection on and around street furniture and merchandising display windows in landscaped areas and in signage.

*Note: The Belltown guidelines are highly detailed. They are available through the City of Seattle.*

## **Summary of Relevant Downtown Guidelines**

Because of its commanding scale, high intensity uses, and rich architectural context Downtown Seattle warrants specific design guidelines. In addition Seattle's downtown serves as a major transit hub and represents the city's highest concentration of pedestrians and transit users.

## **A Site Planning and Massing**

### *A-1 Respond to the physical environment.*

Develop an architectural concept and compose the

building's massing in response to geographic conditions and patterns of urban form found beyond the immediate context of the building site.

## **B Architectural Expression**

### *B-1 Respond to the neighborhood context.*

Develop an architectural concept and compose the major building elements to reinforce desirable urban features existing in the surrounding neighborhood.

*B-2 Create a transition in bulk & scale.*

Compose the massing of the building to create a transition to the height, bulk, and scale of development in neighboring or nearby less intensive of the immediate area. Consider the predominant attributes of the immediate neighborhood and reinforce desirable siting patterns, massing arrangements, and streetscape characteristics of nearby development.

*B-4 Design a well-proportioned & unified building.*

Compose the massing and organize the publicly accessible interior and exterior spaces to create a well-proportioned building that exhibits a coherent architectural concept. Design the architectural elements and finish details to create a unified building, so that all components appear integral to the whole.

**C. Creating the Pedestrian Environment***C-1 Promote pedestrian interaction.*

Spaces for street level uses should be designed to engage pedestrians with the activities occurring within them. Sidewalk-related spaces should be open to the general public and appear safe and welcoming.

*C-2 Design facades of many scales.*

Design architectural features, fenestration patterns, and materials compositions that refer to the scale of human activities contained within. Building facades should be composed of elements scaled to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation.

*C-3 Provide active—not blank—facades.*

Buildings should not have large blank walls facing the street, especially near sidewalks.

*C-4 Reinforce building entries.*

To promote pedestrian comfort, safety, and orientation, reinforce the building's entry.

*C-5 Encourage overhead weather protection.*

Encourage project applicants to provide continuous, well-lit, overhead weather protection to improve pedestrian comfort and safety along major pedestrian routes.

*C-6 Develop the alley facade.*

To increase pedestrian safety, comfort, and interest, develop portions of the alley façade in response to the unique conditions of the site or project.

**D. Enhancing the Streetscape & Open Space***D-1 Provide inviting & usable open space.*

Design public open spaces to promote a visually pleasing, safe, and active environment for workers, residents, and visitors. Views and solar access from the principal area of the open space should be especially emphasized.

*D-2 Enhance the building with landscaping.*

Enhance the building and site with substantial landscaping—which includes special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, and site furniture, as well as living plant material.

*D-3 Provide elements that define the place.*

Provide special elements on the facades, within public open spaces, or on the sidewalk to create a distinct, attractive, and memorable “sense of place” associated with the building.

*D-4 Provide appropriate signage.*

Design signage appropriate for the scale and character of the project and immediate neighborhood. All signs should be oriented to pedestrians and/or persons in vehicles on streets within the immediate neighborhood.

*D-5 Provide adequate lighting.*

To promote a sense of security for people downtown during nighttime hours, provide appropriate levels of lighting on the building facade, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, and on signage.

**E. Minimizing the Adverse Impacts**

*Note: while it is not anticipated that parking garages will be constructed in the downtown the Downtown Design Review Guidelines are relevant for proposed parking facilities located anywhere along the monorail alignment.*



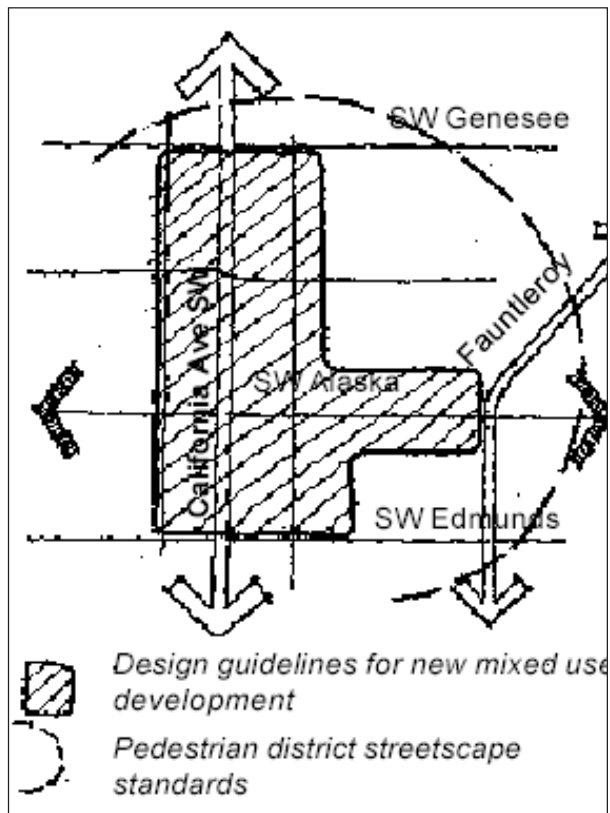
**E-1 Integrate parking facilities.**

Minimize the visual impact of parking by integrating parking facilities with surrounding development. Incorporate architectural treatments or suitable landscaping to provide for the safety and comfort of people using the facility as well as those walking by.

**E-3 Minimize the presence of service areas.**

Locate service areas for trash dumpsters, loading docks, mechanical equipment, and the like away from the street front where possible. Screen from view those elements which for programmatic reasons cannot be located away from the street front.

## Summary of relevant West Seattle Junction Design



The West Seattle Junction area (defined by the map above) represents the commercial core of the West Seattle community. The West Seattle Junction Urban Village Design Guidelines were developed to help successfully integrate new structures into the Junction. The following recommendations and design guidelines are relevant to the design of the monorail:

### Context and Priority Design Recommendations

#### 1. Pedestrian Environment

In general, the pedestrian environment (sidewalks, pathways, entries and crossings) should be safe,

accessible to all, connect to places people want to go, and provide good places to be used for many things. New development should reflect these principles by enhancing commercial district streetscapes with development that makes pedestrian activity at the street level a priority.

New development should support a mix of uses and engage the public realm in a pedestrian-oriented manner. California Avenue SW is recognized as the area's current pedestrian-oriented business district, however the neighborhood envisions SW Alaska Street from California Avenue SW to Fauntleroy Way SW to become an extension of this mixed use district with a continuous pedestrian scale and high level of comfort at the street level.

The neighborhood recognizes that a successful pedestrian environment is really a pedestrian "network", extending beyond sidewalks to include paths, crossings and building entries. Mid-block pedestrian connections are encouraged to be incorporated into larger new development to link parking and surrounding streets to the commercial core.

#### 2. Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility

A pervading quality of the Junction's small town "feel" is expressed in the existing architecture. One way to preserve and continue the small town quality in new development is through the siting, massing and design of new buildings. However, Neighborhood Commercial zones with 85- and 65-foot height limits (NC-85' and NC-65') are the predominant zoning designations in the commercial core on California Avenue SW and SW Alaska Street, causing potential conflicts in height, bulk and scale compatibility



between new development and existing one- to two-story commercial buildings occupying small parcels of land. Furthermore, current zoning in the Junction has created abrupt edges between NC-65' and 85' zones and less intensive, multifamily development.

The City of Seattle's Land Use Code prescribes setback requirements for new development on zone edges between higher and lesser intensive zones. New development in the Junction must carry this treatment further as more refined transitions in height, bulk and scale - in terms of the relationship to surrounding context and within the proposed structure itself - must be considered.

### 3. Architectural Character

Elements and materials that respect and strengthen the commercial core are encouraged in new building design. The quality of the Junction's built environment can be characterized as mixed - good buildings mixed with more mundane construction - and therefore a selective approach to contextual design is warranted. New development should respond to the Junction's context by providing enough visual linkages between the existing stock of good buildings and the proposed structure so as to create a cohesive overall effect. Appropriate visual linkages are simple, basic features such as window proportions, entryway placements, decorative elements and materials. For example, many of the area's most successful commercial buildings exhibit human scale window proportions and bold cornices. Repeating such elements in new development would continue an appropriate pattern.

### Relevant Design Guidelines

#### A-2 Streetscape Compatibility

A pedestrian-oriented streetscape is perhaps the most important characteristic to be achieved in new development in the Junction's mixed use areas. New development—particularly on SW Alaska, Genesee, Oregon and Edmunds Streets—will set the precedent in establishing desirable siting and design characteristics in the right-of-way.

A. Reduce the scale of the street wall with well organized commercial and residential bays and entries, and reinforce this with placement of street trees, drop lighting on buildings, benches and planters.

B. Provide recessed entries and ground-related, small open spaces as appropriate breaks in the street wall.

#### *Considerations:*

Outdoor power and water sources are encouraged to be provided in order to facilitate building maintenance and exterior decorative lighting needs.

Conveniently located sources could also be taken advantage of special community events.

#### *A-4 Human Activity*

An active and interesting sidewalk engages pedestrians through effective transitions between the public and private realm. Particularly in the California Avenue Commercial Core, proposed development is encouraged to set back from the front property line to allow for more public space that enhances the pedestrian environment. Building facades should give shape to the space of the street through arrangement and scale of elements. Display windows should be large and open at the street level to provide interest and encourage activity along the sidewalk. At night, these windows should provide a secondary source of lighting.

#### *A-10 Corner Lots*

Pedestrian activities are concentrated at street corners. These are places of convergence, where people wait to cross and are most likely to converse with others. New development on corner lots should take advantage of this condition, adding interest to the street while providing clear space for movement.

New buildings should reinforce street corners, while enhancing the pedestrian environment.

A. Public space at the corner, whether open or enclosed, should be scaled in a manner that allows for pedestrian flow and encourages social interaction.

To achieve a human scale, these spaces should be well defined and integrated into the overall design of the building.

Consider:

- providing seating;
- incorporating art that engages people;
- setting back corner entries to facilitate pedestrian flow and allow for good visibility at the intersection.

B. Building forms and design elements and features at the corner of key intersections should create gateways for the neighborhood. These buildings should 'announce the block' through the inclusion of features that grab one's interest and mark entry.

## **B. Height, Bulk, and Scale**

### *B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility*

Current zoning in the Junction has created abrupt edges in some areas between intensive, mixed-use development potential and less-intensive, multifamily development potential. In addition, the Code-complying building envelope of NC-65' (and higher) zoning designations permitted within the Commercial Core would result in development that exceeds the scale of existing commercial/mixed-use development.

More refined transitions in height, bulk and scale—in terms of relationship to surrounding context and within the proposed structure itself—must be considered. For detailed height bulk and scale guidelines for the West Seattle Junction see appendix.

## **C. Architectural Elements and Materials**

### *C-1 Architectural Context*

To make new, larger development compatible with the surrounding architectural context, facade articulation and architectural embellishment are important considerations in mixed use and multifamily residential buildings. When larger buildings replace several small buildings, facade articulation should reflect the original platting pattern and reinforce the architectural rhythm established in the commercial core.

### *C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency*

New multi-story developments are encouraged to consider methods to integrate a building's upper and lower levels. This is especially critical in areas zoned NC-65' and greater, where more recent buildings in the Junction lack coherency and exhibit a disconnect between the commercial base and upper residential levels as a result of disparate proportions, features and materials. The base of new mixed-use buildings – especially those zoned 65 ft. in height and higher – should reflect the scale of the overall building. New mixed-use buildings are encouraged to build the commercial level, as well as one to two levels above, out to the front and side property lines to create a more substantial base.

The use and repetition of architectural features and building materials, textures and colors can help create unity in a structure. Consider how the following can contribute to a building that exhibits a cohesive architectural concept:

- facade modulation and articulation;
- windows and fenestration patterns;
- trim and moldings;
- grilles and railings;
- lighting and signage.

### *C-3 Human Scale*

Facades should contain elements that enhance pedestrian comfort and orientation while presenting features with visual interest that invite activity.

Overhead weather protection should be functional and appropriately scaled, as defined by the height and depth of the weather protection. It should be viewed as an architectural amenity, and therefore contribute positively to the design of the building with appropriate proportions and character.

Signage. Signs should add interest to the street level environment. They can unify the overall architectural

concept of the building, or provide unique identity for a commercial space within a larger mixed-use structure. Design signage that is appropriate for the scale, character and use of the project and surrounding area. Signs should be oriented and scaled for both pedestrians on sidewalks and vehicles on streets.

The following sign types are encouraged:

- pedestrian-oriented blade and window signs;
- marquee signs and signs on overhead weather

protection;

- appropriately sized neon signs.

## **D. Pedestrian Environment**

### *D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances*

Design projects to attract pedestrians to the commercial corridors (California, Alaska). Larger sites are encouraged to incorporate pedestrian walkways and open spaces to create breaks in the street wall and encourage movement through the site and to the surrounding area.